UNEP Regional Seas Programme

Acronyms Areas Countries Marine Terms

Definition

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme is an international collaborative approach to protect the marine environment and its resources. Launched in 1974 by UNEP, the main aim of the Regional Seas Programme is to address the degradation of the seas by engaging neighbouring countries in a collaboration to support the achievement of international environmental and development targets (e.g. the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Millennium Development Goals). The UNEP Regional Seas Programme now supports more than 140 countries in marine resource management through their participation as Contracting Parties to 18 regional level programmes around the world[1]. These regional consortia of contracting party countries are referred to as Regional Seas Programmes or, where applicable, Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, which is the mechanism by which the programmes deliver their activities.

Management and Marine Protected Areas

The aim of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme is to address key marine issues such as coastal management in the face of accelerated development, land- and sea-based sources of pollution and litter, environmental pressures on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and the future of marine ecosystems and biodiversity. In each region, these issues are dealt with on the ground by the individual Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAP). Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans often have a remit to establish Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), working with their Contracting Party countries to set up national MPAs. Some Regional Seas Conventions and Action plans, such as OSPAR and the Barcelona Convention, also have a mandate from their Contracting Parties to establish MPAs beyond national jurisdiction.

Convention Context

Following a strategic partnership initiated in 2004, NOAA's Large Marine Ecosystems (LME) are used as units for ecosystem-based management within each Regional Seas Programme [2]. Furthermore, the UNEP Regional Seas Programme is partnered with key global conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) As part of these partnerships, the Regional Seas Programme aims to contribute towards reaching the international targets set by the CBD, such as reaching at least 10% coverage of important marine and coastal habitats within MPAs and controlling or eradicating priority alien invasive species (AIS) by 2020 [1].

Supported By

United Nations Environment Programme, with 143 countries participating in 13 Regional Seas Programmes and 5 partnering programmes

Year of Creation

1974

Coverage

There are 18 Regional Seas Programmes, with programmes in all the world's oceans.

Governing Structure

The status of each Regional Seas Programme varies, as each can be governed in one of the following three ways [1]:

- **UNEP administered**- These have been established by UNEP and are directly administered by UNEP. As such, UNEP has the responsibility for secretariat functions through a Regional Coordinating Unit in the region. Other duties of UNEP include managing finances and providing technical assistance to Contracting Parties.
- **Non-UNEP administered**- These have also been established under the auspices of UNEP but another regional organisation provides the Secretariat and administrative functions. However, they are still part of the global Regional Seas Programme and continue to participate in all cooperative activities.
- **Independent** - These programmes have not been established under the auspices of UNEP, but they participate in the global Regional Seas Programme meetings and support other developing programmes where possible.

Each Regional Seas Programme is governed through one or more Regional Activitiy Centres (RACs) and a Secretariat or a Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU). RACs carry out the activities agreed by the Contracting Parties through action plans or conventions, usually at sub-regional or national levels. They report directly to the RCU, which has the overall responsibility for implementing the decisions of Contracting Parties, along with other administrative and political functions. Each Programme can have several RACs depending on its activities, but only has one RCU.

Action Plans and Convention

The activities of each Regional Seas Programme are organised through Action Plans or Conventions [3]. Action Plans outline the strategy for the programme, and are based on the region's specific environmental concerns. Common topics in Action Plans include the need for environmental assessments, management plans, financial agreements and institutional arrangements. Although Action Plans are agreed upon by the participating governments, they are not legally-binding.

Action Plans become legally-binding if accompanied by a Convention which established the legal framework for the Regional Seas Programme. Some, but not all, Regional Seas Programmes have adopted Conventions through which Contracting Parties commit themselves legally to the agreements mentioned in the Convention. Usually, each Convention is accompanied by more

specific protocols which address individual problems such as oil spills, pollution or particular ecosystems.

Summary of UNEP Regional Seas Programmes

Table of UNEP Regional Seas Programmes

Region	Administration	Governing Instrument		Secretariat/Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU)	Participating Countries
		Action Plan	Convention		
Antarctic	Independent Programme	No Action Plan	CAMLR Convention 1982 The Antarctic Treaty 1961 Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty 1998	CAMLR Commission	Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, European Community
		Arctic Environmental			Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway,

Arctic	Independent Programme	Protection Strategy (AEPS) 1991	No Convention	Arctic Council	Russian Federation, Sweden, United States of America
Baltic	Independent Programme	Baltic Sea Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme 1992	Helsinki Convention 1974/1992	HELCOM	Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden
Black Sea	Non-UNEP Administered	The Revised Strategic Action Plan for the Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation of the Black Sea 2009	Bucharest Convention 1992	Black Sea Commission	Bulgaria, Romania, Russian Federation, Georgia, Turkey, Ukraine
Caspian	Independent Programme	Caspian Environment Programme 1992	Tehran Convention 2003	Conference of the Parties and Secretariat	Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan
Eastern Africa	UNEP Administered	East African Action Plan 1986	Nairobi Convention 1996/2010	Eastern Africa Regional Coordinating Unit	Comoros, France, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, Republic of South Africa
East Asian	UNEP	Action Plan for the Protection and Development of the Marine and	No	Regional Coordinating Unit for	Australia, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines,

Sea	Administered	Coastal Areas of the East Asian Region 1981/1994	Convention	East Asian Seas (EAS/RCU)	Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam
Mediterranean	UNEP Administered	Mediterranean Action Plan 1975	Barcelona Convention 1978/2004	Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (MEDU)	Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Community, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey
North-East Atlantic	Independent Programme	OSPAR Action Plan 1998-2003	OSPAR Convention 1998	OSPAR Commission	Belgium, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom
		Plan of Action for the Protection and			Columbia, Costa Rica,

North-East Pacific	Non-UNEP Administered	Sustainable Development of the Marine and Coastal Areas of the North East Pacific 2002	Antigua Convention 2002	North-East Pacific Programme	El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama
North-West Pacific	UNEP Administered	Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) 1994	No Convention	NOWPAP Regional Coordinating Unit	China, Republic of Korea, Japan, Russian Federation
Pacific	Non-UNEP Administered	No Action Plan	Apia Convention 1990 Noumea Convention 1990	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)	American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Australia, Cook Islands, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Pitcairn Islands, French Polynesia, Soloman Islands, Guam, Tokelau, Kiribati, Tonga, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Nauru, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, New Zealand, Western Samoa, Niue, France,

Red Sea and Gulf of Aden	Non-UNEP Administered	Action Plan for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden 1982/1995/2005	Jeddah Convention 1985	Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA)	United States of America Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine (PLO), Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen
ROPME Sea Area	Non-UNEP Administered	Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Areas of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates 1979	Kuwait Convention 1979	Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME)	Bahrain, Iran, Iraq,Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates
South Asian Seas	Non-UNEP Administered	South Asian Seas Action Plan (SASAP) 1995	No Convention	South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP)	Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
South-East Pacific	Non-UNEP Administered	South-East Pacific Action Plan	Lima Convention	Inter-agency Cooperation between the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (CPPS), UNEP and some two dozen agencies, programmes and Convention Secretariats	Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru
					Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire,

West and Central Africa-WACAF	UNEP Administered	West and Central Africa (WACAF) Action Plan 1984	Abidjan Convention 1984	UNEP acts as Secretariat to the Action Plan	Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, South Africa
Wider Caribbean	UNEP Administered	Caribbean Action Plan 1981	Cartagena Convention 1986	Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, French Caribbean Territories, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, the Netherlands Caribbean Territories, Nicaragua, Panama, St Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom

Caribbean Territories, United States of America, Venezuela

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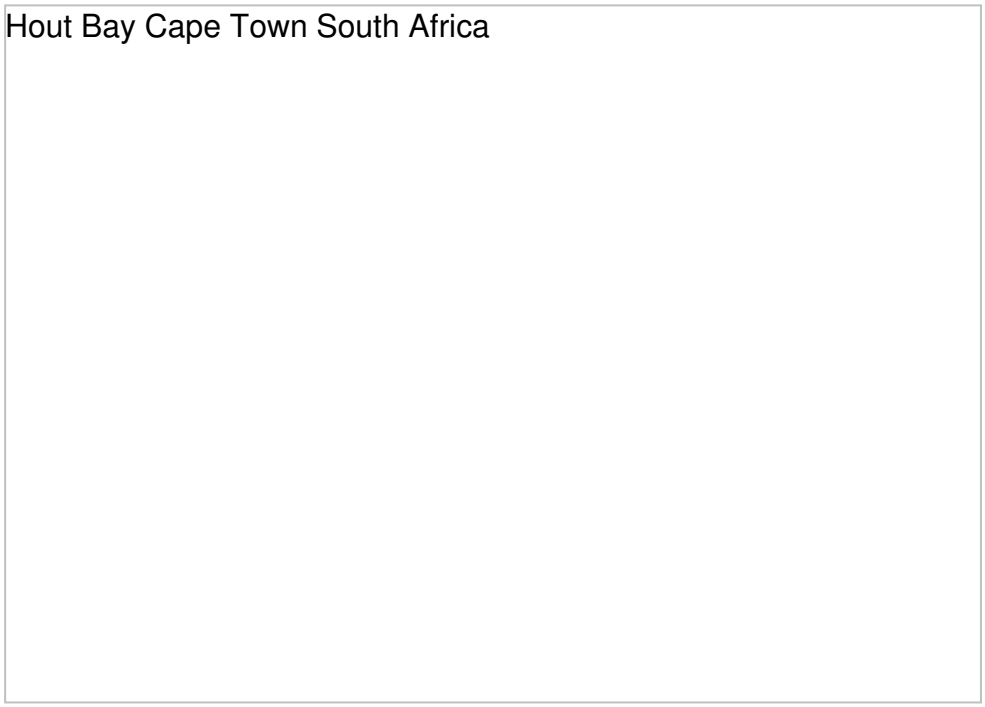

Haut Bay, Cape Town is covered in the Western Africa Regional Seas Programme

Category:

Marine Conventions/Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Conventions/Multilateral Environmental Agreements

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